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RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 7708
RUEHAA/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1813
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 2336
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY 2232
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000521

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN, DRL, PRM, G/TIP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2016

TAGS: KCRM SMIG ELAB ECON KWMN PGOV PHUM UZ

SUBJECT: INTER-AGENCY GROUP DISCUSSES ANTI-TIP MEASURES

REF: A) 05 TASHKENT 2966 B) TASHKENT 453

Classified By: AMB. JON R. PURNELL, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Amendments to the Uzbek criminal code for strengthening Trafficking-In-Persons (TIP) legislation are still under consideration, the current composition of the inter-agency TIP working group is still unknown, and there are no plans to register the International Organization for Migration,s (IOM) Tashkent office. The GOU seems eager to demonstrate its commitment to fighting TIP, but did not provide significantly new information to supplement our submission for the annual TIP report. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On March 9, Poloff met with Deputy Minister of Labor Botir Alimukhamedov, Nodir Kurbanov of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) Department for Investigation and Counter-Terrorism, and Chief of the MFA,s Consular Department Ilhom Abdulkhuseynov to discuss TIP. Alimukhamedov told Poloff that he hoped that the Department,s annual TIP report would be &objective.⁸ He said that the proposed amendments to the criminal code for strengthening TIP legislation are &still under consideration⁸ and recommended that we speak to the Ministry of Justice for more information. The Deputy Minister was unable to provide the current composition of the INL-funded OSCE-sponsored inter-agency working group on TIP. (Note: Several members of the working group have been reassigned since the group's last meeting, which was before the May 2005 Andijon violence. End note.)

¶3. (SBU) Kurbonov said that 160 people work in the MVD's department for combating TIP. Kurbonov also said that MVD has good relations with IOM and the anti-TIP NGO Istiqbolli Avlod. Despite this, Alimukhamedov told Poloff that there is no plan to officially register the International Organization for Migration,s (IOM) Tashkent office, because &it is not an official UN organization⁸ and &there is already a UN office in Tashkent.⁸ Alimukhamedov also pointed out that his ministry already works with the International Labor Organization,s resident representative.

¶4. (SBU) Alimukhamedov responded to U.S. concern about amnesties for female traffickers by emphasizing that no hard criminals or repeat offenders have been amnestied. Kurbonov added that his department is still searching for the traffickers responsible for the group of 60 Uzbek women arrested by Kyrgyz law enforcement in Osh in February. The MVD helped arrange the return of the women.

¶ 15. (SBU) Regarding external labor migration, the Deputy Minister expressed hope that Uzbekistan's entry into the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc) would help harmonize migration legislation. He estimated that 300,000 Uzbeks leave each year to work abroad. (Note: Based on IOM estimates (ref A) of the number of Uzbeks working abroad, this figure is likely on the low end. End note.) The Deputy Minister added that the absence of a visa regime for travel to Russia and Kazakhstan makes it difficult to know exactly how many Uzbeks work in those countries. He added that some laborers who come and go from Russia might have been double counted by agencies that monitor migration flows. He also noted that other migrants often travel as tourists.⁸

¶ 16. (C) Abdulkhuseynov told Poloff that the MFA is actively working to simplify repatriation procedures for victims of trafficking and to reduce or abolish fees for obtaining certificates of return. He said that all consular officers have been instructed to assist in returning victims of trafficking. He commented that, according to the Russian NGO &Angel Coalition,⁸ there are currently only 17 Uzbek girls waiting to be returned from the UAE. (Note: Local IOM officials told Poloff that there are several hundred Uzbek women in UAE prisons. End note.) Abdulkhuseynov asked Poloff for information on measures taken to tackle TIP to the U.S., and also asked what the OSCE was doing to prevent TIP from source countries in Eastern Europe. (Comment: This interest in the U.S. TIP situation seemed politically-motivated, reflective of the GOU's criticism of the Department's annual human rights report for not containing information about U.S. problems. End comment.)

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¶ 17. (C) Comment: The GOU is eager to demonstrate that it is committed to tackling TIP, perhaps as a reaction to the Department's strongly worded Interim TIP Assessment. However, this meeting did not provide significantly new information to supplement our submission for the annual TIP report (ref B). End comment.

PURNELL